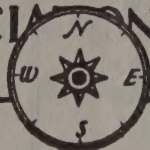


The COMPASS

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS



August 1939

DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES AND PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

Dorothy C. Kahn

EVALUATION OF THE PROFESSIONAL STAFF

Lucille Cairns

THE PROBLEM OF THE WPA

Walter West

REPORT FROM WASHINGTON

Glen Leet

THE FUTURE OF PLACEMENT

Volume XX

Number 10

PERIODIC house cleanings and thorough renovations are even more important in the professional economy than in the domestic. Without them we tend to fall prey to compromises the more dangerous because we are not aware of them. Miss Kahn offers some blunt and provocative propositions which should help us to look afresh at our familiar mental furniture and sort out those pieces which will no longer do.

ESCAPE from the horns of the WPA dilemma has been prescribed by the AASW in a formula equally distasteful to the politicians, the "taxpayers" and those whose sensitiveness makes them deal out unrelieved misery as a better fate for others than the degradation of the dole. "The Problem of the WPA" analyzes once more the fallacies of work-relief and presents the program which professional social workers have been proposing as the only, if expensive way out.

IN recent years the Association has worked through various parts of its program on the problems which beset social work as a vocation—problems of the agency's employment practices, of the selection of personnel, of the evaluation of personnel, of job description, and so forth. These problems, general as they are, have engaged an ardent, patient interest. Paradoxically the problems involved in placement, for all their direct practical significance, have evoked more irritation than concern and not been recognized in their professional seriousness and technical difficulty. Will the present state of jeopardy in which professional placement finds itself arouse professional social workers to view placement as a function over which they should seek to maintain a separate professional control?

At this stage in the game social workers feel gingerly about formal evaluations. When evaluations are conveyed by piecemeal, remain vague as to their conclusions and escape the record, both parties may play ostrich and evade strict accountability. Miss Cairns' article offers encouragement to the nervous by indicating the common road and planned direction which formal evaluations open up.

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Democratic Principles and Public Assistance: Case Work in Determining Eligibility

By Dorothy C. Kahn

OUR concern about the status of democracy may be well measured by the fact that this word in some form appears in 24 titles for conference sessions.* I suggest that some statistician undertake to count the times it occurs in the contents of papers presented here. There are those who believe in the cumulative educational effect of iteration. There are others who believe that this is a device to dull rather than sharpen our wits, a method by which to achieve a kind of uncritical adherence to a compelling though somewhat vague idea. This is the very antithesis of democracy. As social workers we have a rather special challenge to invest this idea with specific content arising from our professional knowledge and professional skill, to show how democratic principles are related to or utilized in the administration of public assistance, if they are. We cannot do this by an appeal to the dictionary although the Greek roots of the word democracy are helpful (*demos*—people, *kratin*—to rule or *kratos*—authority.) We cannot do it by the familiar trick of calling those activities, methods or practices which we dislike, “undemocratic.” We can do it *only* by what I venture to call scientific demonstration. Much is said about how democracy must be made to work. It is easy to see how this is done in relation to certain issues like freedom of speech, freedom of the press, or assembly. It is not so easy to see how it is done in applying that other less contested guarantee of our liberties—namely, the pursuit of happiness. Yet, this last is the special area of the social worker. Has our preoccupation with the individual led us unconsciously into an anarchistic philosophy that sees the needy person inevitably at war with the society of which he is a part, finding happiness *only* at the risk of happiness for others? Or have we discovered through the experience of meeting mass need a new kind of rational relationship between the so-called welfare of the individual and the welfare of

society? If it is the first of these, then democracy and public assistance are unrelated and we have nothing to discuss. If it is the second, as I believe it is, then we are called upon to explain, illustrate and defend our findings until they become as much a part of popular knowledge as the theory of the circulation of the blood.

In order to show how this relationship works it is necessary first to state some hypotheses and attempt briefly to test them. Let us try only a few, but these essential to our proposition.

I. *It is not good for people to be poor.*

Do we believe this as a nation? Then why does it continue to be true of so large a number of our people? Is it because we really cannot help it, or because we still wonder whether it may not in fact be good for *some* people to be poor, as a lesson to them or perhaps to the rest of us, lest we all throw up our jobs, and drink up our remaining cash, while someone else or “the government” satisfies our need for food, shelter, clothing, amusement. (N.B. It is essential to this strange phantasy that we be assumed to have no need for activity.) George Bernard Shaw some years ago made this statement of our first hypothesis:

“It is perhaps the greatest folly of which a nation can be guilty to attempt to use poverty as a sort of punishment for offenses that it does not send people to prison for We cannot afford to have poor people anyhow, whether they be lazy or busy, drunken or sober, virtuous or vicious, thrifty or careless, wise or foolish It is a public nuisance as well as a private misfortune. Its toleration is a national crime.”

He assumes that this is something which a nation *can* help, even a nation whose natural resources less obviously afford the possibility of a healthful decent life for its entire population. The offenses to which he refers include, among others, *not working*—that is, not working when you have no money to

* This paper was delivered at a meeting of the Social Case Work Section, National Conference of Social Work, Buffalo, 1939.

maintain yourself. It is obviously no offense punishable by poverty if you are merely *idle* at the expense of your thrifty grandfather or on your winnings at bridge or Keno, or on the dividends from some stock you were smart enough to buy at the right time.

More recently a pressure group in discussing the application process with a public assistance executive raised this question: If it is our sincere desire to extend relief to persons in need, then why, knowing the attitudes that constrain the needy person, does not the administration send its representatives out into the streets and byways to seek out the needy and offer them help—the mountain going to Mahomet. This was doubtless a rhetorical question. But it may be well to ponder over it for a moment in connection with our first hypothesis. There are a number of possible answers. One may be that in these days of the press, the radio and the grapevine, we have, in effect, gone out into the byways and sought out the needy. This at least is a common complaint against the social worker, the modern Robin Hood. Another answer may be that it is good for man to bestir himself in order to meet his own needs, if only to exercise his muscle in walking to the relief office. A third answer may be that the right to starve is one of those inalienable privileges which even a benevolent despotism does not seek to abridge. There are doubtless many other more effective replies.

Yet there are parallel hypotheses about the common welfare which have been followed historically by governmental activities equally shocking in their day. When it was agreed that it was not good for people to be ignorant, there followed as the only effective remedy the public school. And shortly thereafter emerged the compulsory attendance laws. When smallpox was found to be avoidable, compulsory vaccination followed. When industrial accidents were found to be preventable, safety measures came to be enforced by government.

By a similar process of logic were the first feeble measures of public assistance brought about. And as in the early history of education, vaccination and other social functions of government, there is some complaint that these measures abridge the individual's rights and fail to promote the commonweal.

II. *Poverty or the state of being in need and personal fault or inadequacy are not causally related.*

Needless to say, this hypothesis has achieved an acceptance unknown before the depres-

sion. It was achieved mainly by force of those circumstances which brought the fact of unemployment close to the lives of millions as it had never been before,—not merely the unemployed themselves but their great company of relatives, friends and neighbors who still perhaps had jobs or incomes. And the reiteration of the phrase "through no fault of their own" did its part. This same kind of thing had happened before in the establishment of widows' pensions for instance (the modern equivocation is "aid to dependent children"), and in the inauguration of pensions for the blind, and old age pensions. But with this difference—it would not occur to anyone to blame a widow for her widowhood, a half-orphan for his dependence, etc. These groups were automatically excused from responsibility for their condition, regardless of the fact that not all widows were in need, not all the blind, by no means all the aged. But for the unemployed whose condition was caused by neither "act of God" nor a natural phenomenon, it was necessary to *construct* an excuse, an admission that idleness which was for so long associated with slackness and vagrancy might not be wilful, —a grudging admission, lest it be assumed that the contrary is true and society is at fault. The excuse wears thin and begins to sound hollow before long, because it is born of pity and not of understanding. To me there is no more significant indication of the out-moded doctrines influencing our social structure than this depression phrase "in need through no fault of their own." Uttered as an earnest plea for consideration and help for the truly helpless, it nevertheless unwittingly attests the popular belief that under ordinary conditions people are in need through *some* fault of their own, a belief rooted in our culture, fostered by religious injunctions, nourished by education and verified by the success magazines,—a belief that could be routed by the most elementary understanding of the economics of an industrial society, as modern psychology has replaced the belief in witch-craft.

It is almost impossible to discuss this matter even with one's professional colleagues without running athwart prejudices that defy both reason and evidence. Do we really believe that people only work because of the driving force of threatened starvation? Is the inner urge to activity that is personally satisfying and socially useful a psychological phenomenon peculiar to the creative artist? There is no current utility in the "work or starve" motif in a society that cannot find work for those who wish to work, and per-

mits many of those who do work still to be underfed, ill-clad and ill-housed in a nation of storehouses bursting with surplus commodities and a people bursting with unused productive energy.

This leads us to a third hypothesis—

III. *The social treatment of persons in need is distinguishable from study of the problem and collective action required to change the situation. Treatment, study and action are interdependent and all three are essential functions of a democratic society.*

Much of the confusion of thought about methods dealing with persons in need arises here. As social workers we have acquired a capacity to accept the client as a person and to deal with him in a variety of situations. The physician has learned a similar professional attitude. But he has also learned the fallacy of identifying the ill person with the illness. It is on the illness that research laboratories and public health measures are focused. They are the study and action forces of medicine. It is likewise action when the physician treats the individual victims of infectious diseases or epidemics and when the social worker authorizes relief.

Conversely to assume that the objective treatment of a needy person involves an acceptance of the factors which create his need is to identify the ill person with the illness. If we can be saved from the error of assuming all undesirable states to be inherent and predetermined by personal equipment, then assistance becomes something which must be administered not merely humanely but in a manner that restores the recipient to a socially desirable status, indeed creates this status for him even during the period of dependence. This concept frees us simultaneously to undertake aggressive measures to change the factors contributing to his dependency. It is not necessary to hate or pity the unemployed or to require them to hate or pity themselves in order to be free to attack the evil of unemployment. People do not get well of an illness sooner by being made ashamed of their condition. In that way hypochondriacs and neurotics are developed. But there is still a popular belief that making people ashamed of dependency will cure them of their abnormal state.

Many social workers fail to make this fine but necessary distinction. Our willing acceptance of superstitious justifications for rendering assistance betrays us to the enemies of social change. We cling to the idea of "paying mothers to take care of their chil-

dren," "rewarding the heroes who made the world safe for democracy," "repaying the aged pioneers who built the country," etc., category after category, because we have failed to face the bare innocent fact of need in our time.

IV. *It is the proper function of a democratic government to remedy or alleviate an evil which it cannot prevent.*

Thus the provision of public assistance is as appropriate a function of government as the maintenance of public schools, protection of the water supply, fire and safety provisions, the police, the courts, the provision of roads or the control of traffic.

All this may seem to be an exposition of the obvious. But it is impossible to construct a rational theory of professional practice without first examining its basic assumptions. This does not mean that I am about to produce either a new or an original theory concerning the practice of case work in determining eligibility for public assistance. At this point I am excluding further consideration of social action and study for the purposes of this discussion. I shall, however, attempt to describe a theory of case work in determining eligibility as it is used in the best practice of our time.

If there is any application of democratic principles to public assistance it must be found in the first function to be performed in administering the service, namely, the process of deciding who shall receive it. It seems to me altogether possible that the time may come when the selection of persons who shall receive public assistance may be as automatic a process as that which determines where the fire department shall go when the alarm rings. I would be surprised if any of those now alive should see this change. The very concept of eligibility implies both a set of criteria and a process of selection. There are at least two reasons why it is impossible to determine eligibility for public assistance automatically. One of these is the fact that the criteria are not simple and obvious. The other is that the use of the criteria involves a special kind of knowledge and skill. Human need is probably never as apparent either to the needy person, his neighbors or to the general public as is a house on fire. Moreover, there is still so grudging an acceptance of our first hypothesis that the limits of provisions for assistance leave great gaps between needs and the immediately available resources for meeting them; so that criteria of eligibility may be and frequently are relatively unrelated even to recognized needs. An illustration of this is the so-called family budget

which has come to mean in many places, not the estimated requirements and the existing income of a family set down in a comparative statement, but rather an arbitrary device. The formula reads: "Local standard of relief minus income equals grant." (It may be desirable to comment in passing that this is a calculation, and not a budget.) Nevertheless, the local standard of assistance, however arbitrary it may be, is one of the criteria of eligibility. Its use calls for the exercise of judgment in determining the correct figures for either side of the ledger. Other criteria are much less obvious, such as residence, available resources,—even marital status. All require the exercise of judgment in applying them to a specific situation. There may be laws to cover each of these criteria but their administration is obviously a responsibility requiring professional discretion.

Thus the process of selecting the beneficiaries of public assistance is a specific exercise of a very fundamental democratic principle—the equitable application of a general law to a specific instance. The question may well be raised at this point as to why this process of interpreting and applying the law is not a function carried out by the legal machinery exclusively. It is interesting to recall the early administration of the mothers' pension laws by the courts (a practice which still obtains in some places) and the movement away from this practice. This change, like the establishment of probation services, medical and psychiatric clinics in connection with the courts, did not come about because of the incompetence of the courts to apply the law of the land, but because the courts, in order to be able to function *equitably* required special knowledge of the nature of problems on which they were required in the end to make a judgment. And society as a whole demanded that as far as possible we avoid the necessity to resort to such action. These knowledges and skills are to be found in the professions of medicine, psychiatry and social work. The ultimate question of what is equitable is determined by our advancing knowledge of the nature of the human body, the mind and of human relations, and the interaction between these and physical, social and economic forces. The character of the governing body of law will be influenced by the extent to which this knowledge and skill can be utilized in achieving equity in the law itself as well as in its application.

Before moving on to the more complicated question of method as an expression of democratic principles, it might be pointed out that

this theory of application of law furnishes a simple, objective and logical basis for expecting that this particular body of law shall be initially and primarily administered by social workers, a theory which robs arguments for the substitution of auditors or business men or credit operatives of much of its point, as in other questions of government function, analysis of the job to be done carries an almost automatic conclusion concerning the type of people who are to do it.

It will be noted that up to this point case work has scarcely been specifically mentioned. I have deliberately avoided the reiteration of the technical term in order to examine the process which calls for its use. It may be that it is clarifying occasionally to attempt to isolate the knowledge and social attitude aspects of technical equipment from the specific skill necessary to apply these. It may be that we need a new term or perhaps two new terms to describe these two parts of what is now called case work. Obviously many kinds of knowledge are necessary to the process of determining eligibility for public assistance. Our concern here is with what is called case work. To its long history of formulation and re-formulation of theory we are largely indebted for the particular combination of understanding of human behavior in a social situation with an attitude toward that behavior which we tested in our hypotheses. It is one of the interesting phenomena of recent years that we have been able to teach these first aspects of case work to large numbers of persons who are described as technically "not trained." This fact is of enormous importance not only for public assistance but for the other public social services as well, and carries significant implications for both education and administration which it is not our purpose here to discuss.

The method used in determining eligibility for public assistance will grow out of this combination of knowledge and attitude. The person seeking assistance is helped to become a partner in a democratic enterprise. This is true regardless of whether he is found to be eligible or not. It is even true when he is, as is sometimes the case, discovered to have received assistance without warrant. We often describe this effort to achieve a partnership as one in which we attempt to make the acceptance of assistance possible without damaging the integrity of the applying person or his family or group. This rather negative description "without damaging integrity" is occasioned by the fact that the

concept of public assistance in a democracy, for the applicant, as well as others, has to be rescued from a welter of folklore, fetishes and symbols about self-maintenance.

For this confusion must be substituted clarity about the social function of government and the rights and responsibilities of its citizens when in need as well as in other distresses. If one of us applies for a passport, it does not require the use of case work skill to acquaint us with our rights and make us accountable for our actions as travellers under the protection of our government. There is nothing in our mores to make us feel either guilty, inferior, vindictive, ashamed or aggressive in making this application. We assume our rights and, usually, our corresponding responsibilities. The psychology of the contractual relationship between government and the individual does not have to be established either in general or case by case. But in the confusion of theory that still beclouds assistance, the psychology of the contractual relation *does* have to be established case by case *and* in general. It has to be substituted for the psychology of a gift, either grudging or laden with compassion, or a quid pro quo for work, or for good behavior, or for a vote, or for the idea that a right is something which does not include consideration of the rights of others. In other words, the idea of right and responsibility have to be reinterpreted to the applicant for assistance and divested of their unhealthy emotional content.

The question has been raised as to whether responsibility is not used here in a special sense. I believe not. It means "accountable for." One cannot be accountable unless he is free, unhampered by restraints that have no reasonable relation to the thing one is accountable for.

The great quarrel of social workers with those who would restrict assistance on the ground that it is bad for people in the first place, and self-perpetuating in the second, is precisely on this point. Arguments like this one here presented will help very little except insofar as they tend to articulate what it is we are up to, and why it is good for people if administered on democratic principles, and consequently self-liquidating to the degree that society makes possible. We long ago learned that it is not only wasteful but senseless to attempt to construct a legal system on the assumption that all of us tend naturally to steal, murder and disregard the elementary rights of others. Innumerable laws and penalties plus one policeman per person

would be inadequate in a society so conceived. The real situation is perhaps illustrated by the tendency to call loudly for a traffic light at a busy intersection where there is none. This demand is made not for the purpose of punishing other less considerate drivers but because we cannot manage so complicated a problem of individual and group activity without direction.

Similarly the social worker knows that the applicant for assistance, while he wants money as definitely as the driver wants to get across the street, is seeking to know the rules and tends to obey them, so long as he can do so "without fear or favor." If, for instance, he is required to swear to a statement that he is accounting accurately all the information necessary to determine eligibility, that seems to him reasonable and necessary and he becomes a cooperator. But if he is required to swear to the same statement once a month, he knows he is suspected of bad faith, and resents the requirement. He may feel himself at odds with the authority imposing it, or be driven to evade, or perhaps to try to be just as good at this game of bad faith as he can. A far more damaging possibility is that he may accept the situation as the essential irrationality of government and be enslaved.

The increase in punitive and unreasonable requirements in recent legislation is a challenge to interpretation and action on the one hand, and a sharp warning that the case worker must act as agent for the principles of democracy, even during an epidemic of undemocratic legislation.

Finally it would be unrealistic to omit the problem of volume and time and rules, even reasonable rules, so often regarded as an impediment to the use of case work in determining eligibility. Time does not permit a detailed examination of this complicated question. But surely knowledge, as we have described it, and the skill used to engage people in this responsible relation to a democratic institution, are not time bound. The conventions necessary to handling large numbers of persons with order, dispatch and helpfulness do not destroy the meaning of the enterprise, unless those who administer it are either unskillful, inflexible or clumsy. In fact, some of these conventions have actually facilitated the process.

In his recent biography, A. A. Milne discusses with some feeling his belief that a younger generation considers form inconsistent with freedom. He illustrates by an extract from a letter from a young writer who asks:

"Don't you think that the present conventional form of play structure and the physical limitations of the stage hinder the dramatist from expressing himself as freely and as fully as he might in the cinema form?"

"Answer: Certainly. One is also hindered by the conventional form of the sonnet. How much more freely and fully Wordsworth might have expressed himself about Westminster Bridge if he had been writing a guidebook."

The question posed for this discussion was "Are the principles of democracy and case work compatible in the administration of public assistance?" To answer the question it has been necessary to subject the philo-

sophical orientation and knowledge content of the case worker to some analysis. Skill has been dealt with only as it is utilized in determining eligibility. It is a common distortion of the concept of the uses of case work skill to believe that case work takes place only when the individual is treated therapeutically in some social disability or emotional situation. Yet there is no more challenging social disability or emotional situation than that of loss of self-maintenance. To me, there is no greater therapy than that which uses the democratic principles underlying the social function of government to help individuals to free themselves from the spiritual disfranchisement of dependency. When this happens, democratic principles have been put to work.

The Problem of the WPA

A STRIKE of the workers on WPA on a large scale and with official American Federation of Labor backing is bound to call attention to some of the difficulties in the work-relief combination which have been overlooked in the promotion by the administration of its relief program.* It is obvious that the federal government would be almost the last employer in the country to slash the wage scale for highly organized and skilled trades in a program which was real work and for which it accepted the role of employer. Its recent legislation reducing the prevailing wage, if the program is regarded as relief, is certainly legitimate. On the other hand, whoever accepts the program as though it were real employment might be impelled to the extremity of a strike against the government if legislation deliberately undercut the prevailing wage attained by the collective and cumulative efforts of labor organizations. There might be grave question as to the wisdom of the legislation in question, as well as about the action of the American Federation of Labor, but the root of the difficulty is in the fallacy of work-relief and the kind of problems which accumulate in that unnatural combination.

These problems have been hard to discern because they have been covered by a simple but effective polemic device. To question the combination was made to appear to be

advocacy of the dole or of direct relief as opposed to work. This is probably the reason why there has been so little real study of a problem which has created extremely painful situations in every session of Congress for the last four years. Perhaps with the disclosure of other points of discomfort, such as the current strike, there will develop a greater recognition of the need for a thorough and basic analysis of the relief programs of the nation.

If the present strike does not bring the paradoxical situation into the open some of the other problems which are growing more and more apparent about the work-dole arrangement will. The eighteen-month limitation on the length of time a worker can hold a WPA job, in my opinion will be more difficult to explain than the action on prevailing wages. It is currently reported in New York, for instance, that about 75,000 workers will be dropped. Theoretically for a month, these workers are faced with competition from about 77,000 potential workers now on home relief, and will have a long wait until their turn for the preferred work-dole opportunity comes again. While these 75,000 are accommodating themselves to the general relief program, it may become more publicly apparent that there are great numbers of "employable" persons on the home relief rolls. That is a situation which Congress might well study. The figures in other jurisdictions will certainly be found to differ

* This article was written for *The Christian Science Monitor*, August 5th.

from those of New York City, and the ratios will differ as well. But those close to the program throughout the country know that the work relief program has not been available to all, or anywhere near all, of those who were in need and who could work, at any time.

If this were studied further in relation to the present relief plan it would be found that the WPA program has been promoted because it was better than the dole; because it was the American plan; because relief had no part in the American plan, etc. But it would be discovered that relief does have a very large part to play in the American plan; that a very large number of those who can't find any employment in private industry have no basis for subsistence except relief; and that they must depend on a relief system which has been disowned by the federal government; that as a result the state and local governments have followed suit and have let relief standards fall to disgracefully low levels. In some jurisdictions, notably the District of Columbia, the plight of the person able to work but who is not on WPA is worse than that of an "unemployable," because the local governments have made provision only for those who could not work. By paying three-fourths of the cost of the work relief bill, but nothing for the direct relief bill, the federal government has induced the state and local governments to emphasize the program for the same selected workers to which the federal program attends.

There are problems as to the burdens which are being put on local governments whose revenues, largely dependent on real estate taxes, are inflexible. There are problems as to the cross currents in administration of the total relief program when parts of it are local, parts are controlled federally, and other parts are worked out on a cooperative grant-in-aid plan with participation of all three. There are the same problems of the interdependence of all parts of the country, socially, economically, and politically, which, when recognized in 1933, led to the assumption by the federal government of a logical participation in the program. The problems still exist, and the federal government is still participating in a large way financially by its work relief appropriations, but has absolved itself from responsibility, which the other governmental units are unable to carry alone, for a vitally important part of the total program.

Finally, there are the questions, brought to the fore by recent legislation, as to whether

work and relief can be put together without impairing both. That some of those in need of relief receive better relief in a more satisfactory way; and that there are thousands of estimable projects to testify in favor of the plan, cannot be denied. Strong support for the plan has come from the organizations of workers fortunate enough to be included. Repeated endorsements have been given by the officials of large cities, which, by the WPA plan, have been given opportunities for direct dealing with the federal government, and have been able to secure at federal expense large work projects of municipal benefit. It was a program which has had popular support because it seemed to avoid the features of idleness and getting something free, which are popularly distasteful.

These attributes of the work relief plan do not eliminate the liabilities underlying the program, that cluster around the attempt to make a compromise of work and relief. WPA has not proven work on a real basis. The government does not consider itself a real employer. A relief status is a necessary basis for a job, instead of ability and fitness. The relations between this relief program and jobs in private industry are much more complicated, by the nature of the administrative necessity, than are those of other relief programs. The advantages are admitted, but can hardly be conceded at the face value of the slogan of "better than the dole" until the limitations of the work value, the loss sustained by those not selected for the program, and the failure to achieve an integrated and cooperative attack on the whole relief program, are taken into consideration.

The American Association of Social Workers has advocated, since the beginning of federal relief, a nationally coordinated program which would be based on three major factors: real public work, insurance, and public assistance. This Association is a membership organization composed of social workers, employed under public or private auspices, who meet certain qualifications of special training and education for their work. In a new profession, which has still to develop as concrete a basis and as unified education as many of the older professions, and whose members therefore differ widely in experience and opinion, there has been a strong, united agreement on these factors. Out of their experience and their familiarity with the inside of the relief problem and the needs which it is intended to meet, professional social workers have given repeated expression

to the hope of a thorough recasting of the program along the following lines:

1. A program of employment adapted to employment needs; that is to say on a scale as adequate as possible at any particular time to meet the need for employment. Such a program would need to include work of all types and varieties, and to develop resources for the employment of "white collar" workers. It would be directly concerned with the conservation of the nation's human resources. Eligibility for employment on such programs would be based on ability and willingness to work and lack of availability of private employment with no discrimination because of residence or citizenship. Wages should be based on the prevailing wage principle, or on any other alternative satisfactory to organized labor.

2. Systems of automatic benefits for those who are unemployed and in circumstances which are subject to classification and automatic administration. These would include such systems as the present unemployment compensation, with the addition of benefits for loss of wages due to illness, and the further extension of the principle as categories can be established with proper administrative controls.

3. A system of grants-in-aid to the states for public assistance, which would include in addition to the old age assistance, aid to dependent children; aid to the blind programs now in force; and provision for general assistance organized and developed on a basis of humane consideration of the needs of those not covered in the other programs. The need for general assistance is recognized now to apply to great numbers of persons who are and would be eligible for placement on work programs, but for whom jobs are not available, such as older persons not eligible for old age assistance; those permanently disabled; the sick; those who have exhausted unemployment benefits, or who need for various reasons in the public interest supplementation of low earnings. Precisely as general assistance is not for a class or category but provides the basis for smoothly functioning employment and insurance systems, it is a basic and necessary part of the total program and needs the whole-hearted backing rather than the neglect of the federal government.

A work authority, an insurance authority, and an assistance authority, implemented by a pervasive employment service, operated on a basis of cooperation between the federal, state, and local agencies, would constitute the

necessary machinery. Most of the machinery is at hand in the federal government, and many of the necessary state counterparts are available. It would be machinery which could change gears, whereas the present program, never complete, nor completely coordinated, is thrown more out of kilter whenever some relatively minor adjustments are tried.

The present plans, added together, are expensive, and the alternate plan would be equally so, if the needed work programs were properly developed. The argument for a change must remain on the side of results, not of lesser cost. The cost is bound to be large as long as the nation has the responsibility for providing substitutes for private employment, and for protective and security measures for a large fraction of the population. But just because the cost is so large, and because every one knows the problem is here for a long time to come, there is every reason to abandon slogans, and establish a compact and workable system.

WALTER WEST

New AASW Publication

Another recent publication by the Association is a study of employment practices,* a thesis by Miss Alice McCabe, which, through a special arrangement with the National Youth Administration, the Association has been able to make available for general use. Miss McCabe's thoughtful approach to the problems of qualifications and working conditions for social workers will be of real interest to those who are concerned with establishing an increasingly close connection between competent performance of social work services and conditions of work which liberate that competence. Of particular interest is the bearing which each employment practice and policy considered by Miss McCabe has upon the as yet incompletely defined concept of the "approved" social agency. This approach is little explored; but out of such study of agency employment practices and further clarification of desirable standards may emerge a characterization which is not only defined but administrable. Of special interest also is the thorough-going questionnaire developed for the study and Miss McCabe's comments on its usefulness after completion of the study.

* *Personnel and Employment Practices in Six Social Case Work Agencies in St. Louis, 1936*, price, \$1.00.

The Problem of Placement

What is to take the place of the Joint Vocational Service as an agency for vocational counselling and placement? This question, prompted by the recent decision of the JVS board to liquidate that organization, is being anxiously discussed in social work circles. As the plan is to discontinue services at the end of 1939, there is reason for intensive work in the next few months.

The JVS, according to the report of its Special Study Committee, "served 31.2 per cent of a group of 1409 social workers during a three-year period. About half these workers are now in the Northeast area and about one-third in the Midwest. JVS was the source of information for 9 per cent of the employment shifts of workers; for 5 per cent of the jobs filled by social agencies in 8 selected cities; and for 10 per cent of the jobs filled by member agencies of the Family Welfare Association of America." These small percentages are not a fair measure of the importance to social work of professionally controlled placement. The vocational career and professional development of the individual social worker may be made or marred by the choice of a job. The fate of social work personnel depends to a considerable extent on the skill and reliability with which placements are made. Likewise the social agency's program is affected for better or worse by the appropriateness with which its personnel needs can be met.

The proper utilization of existing social work personnel is a major professional concern. As a professional concern it is in need of the greater attention because the problems of placement for social workers are not well understood even in their practical difficulty. Any placement service labors under the handicap of not being able to make to order the worker wanted by the agency or the job wanted by the applicant. There is in addition the baffling problem of measuring the assets of the worker and evaluating the job in the agency. The answer to these familiar x, y, z's in the job-worker equation will be gradually found only if placement can be kept under some professional control.

The necessity for professional understanding and support of placement is the more urgent because placement is a highly specialized function, as much so as professional education. It cannot be done on the side or rely on makeshifts. Like all activities involving

professional stakes it calls for more effort and expenditure than appear on the surface. Its immediate results seem a small return on the investment. Therefore well-conducted placement is not a commercially profitable enterprise. It takes professional understanding to recognize this fact and professional conviction to obtain the funds essential to establishing placement services that will meet good standards.

We lack many of the facts about personnel which are needed for careful, long-term plans. Because the JVS was an organized service, its work was open to examination whereas we know little of the merits or demerits of the other avenues which are used for placement and have correspondingly less opportunity to identify and correct defects in the informal or incidental practice of placement. The small proportion of placements conducted through JVS may therefore be an argument for more rather than less concerted effort to bring under organized professional auspices activities which up to this time have been carried on by persons or organizations lacking technical knowledge and proper facilities for doing placement responsibly.

The service of the JVS has been preponderantly a service to agencies and personnel in the case work fields. Information at present available indicates that in other branches of social work the national agencies take a direct organizational responsibility for placement and do not report an urgent need for independent service to their fields. For these and other reasons the representatives of national case work agencies who are now preparing initial plans for a national personnel agency are limiting these plans to the need for vocational counselling, information and placement which exists for agencies and workers in the case work field. The details of the service to be offered workers and agencies, conditions of membership, and financing and organization are being worked out, together with plans for submitting the proposed program to agencies and individual social workers. The restriction on the fields of social work to be covered offers the advantage of greater homogeneity in the nature of the personnel, agencies and problems involved but will not be maintained if an articulate demand for inclusion develops in the future from the national agencies representing other fields of social work. The

extension of merit systems in the public welfare services limits the use and usefulness of an independent placement agency for public agencies and personnel but the plan under consideration contemplates developing whatever opportunities there may be for making placements in public agencies or assisting applicants interested in shifts between public and private jobs.

Less definite at this time is a proposal for several regional placement services. Councils of social agencies, schools of social work, and chapters of the AASW have been asked by an Organizing Committee set up by the JVS to take part in preliminary discussions of plans for regional conferences for the promotion of regional placement services. Among the debated questions is this one as to whether new services should be organized on a regional or a national basis. On the one hand it is urged that placement can be more effectively done by the localized agency with its easier and more direct access both to personnel and agencies. On the other it is pointed out that neither social workers nor agencies are always content to be limited to

local possibilities and that geographically separated services would involve expensive and complex channels for interchange.

The report of the Special Study Committee of the JVS has transferred the major emphasis of its recommendations from a placement service to a non-placement, "program-planning agency" to be called the "National Vocational Agency" or the NVA. The proposed operation would cover "elements of research, information, planning and promotion." The Organizing Committee sponsored by the JVS is undertaking responsibility for seeing that the NVA is established. The AASW staff has been brought into consultation on plans for a national placement agency to serve the case work fields. Staff assistance has also been sought in preparations which members of the Organizing Committee are making for a formal approach to the Association for AASW sponsorship of the NVA. The Association will need to put a proposal for such sponsorship into the same hopper with its other concerns with standards of personnel and determine what part it can best play with its resources.

An Experiment with Evaluation of the Professional Staff

By Lucille Cairns

*T*HERE are two aspects to the problem of staff evaluation. One is the problem of creating the administrative procedures necessary to carrying out evaluations as a matter of joint concern to agency and worker. The other is the highly technical problem of determining what is to be evaluated, what criteria are to be used and how they are to be applied.

In this paper Miss Cairns describes how an administrative plan for the evaluation of staff members was developed in the St. Louis County Welfare Association of Clayton, Missouri, what problems in relationships were considered, and what steps were taken in carrying out the project.

Our agency had been for some time without a formal policy for the evaluation of staff performance, professional or clerical. A few months ago, our staff Committee on Agency Policies called this to the attention of the staff when presenting their report on minimum standards of agency practice. About the same time case workers who had come to the agency within the past year, some from other agencies where there were periodic evaluation conferences, began to request planned discussions of their agency experience with their supervisors. Two of the supervisors had been with the agency about a

year and the third, a year and a half. The full-time supervision job was new to two of the supervisors when they came to the agency. They, too, were expressing a need for some plan of evaluation that would give them some idea of where they were going and would also serve the purposes of first, an inventory or stock taking which might bring out unused assets and second, a spring house cleaning of tensions accumulated in relationships of case worker and supervisor and agency.

Further discussion brought out by the supervisors indicated that over a six or twelve-

months' period both supervisor and case worker might accumulate certain patterns, attitudes, or blind spots in their relationships. The supervisor and case worker for instance might find themselves initially so intent on helping the case worker where she could use and want guidance that this might continue with ultimately some perspective on the total job lost. It would be easy for the supervisor to lose sight of the case worker's strengths in other areas. The case worker might therefore be more consciously feeling her weakness rather than her strength in her supervisory relationship. The supervisor might become discouraged about herself and the case worker and look to evaluation as an essential next step to throw light on the more total job. Evaluation at this point would serve the purpose of confirmation, or new understanding, knowledge and perspective on the present judgments of both case worker and supervisor. The use of evaluation at this point seems to have much in common with the objectives of evaluation of treatment in a continuing case work situation.

Our supervisors thought that a formal evaluation sponsored by the agency not only offered opportunity for the increase of perspective but also for the integration of the positive and negative aspects of the case work job and the supervisory relationship. Where relationships in an agency are new, it seemed that by the agency taking responsibility there was achieved a more impersonal and less threatening quality in the process of the evaluation. In other words, "We are doing this with the whole staff; no one staff member is being singled out for special reasons here." Yet, because the evaluation process is essentially individualizing, there would be stimulation to each worker to individual participation in analysis and judgment of self, supervisor, and their agency relationships. In the process it could be expected that there would be opportunity for expression of satisfactions which might or might not be essential or helpful to the expression of accumulated tensions. The supervisors admitted their own part in influencing the case worker's freedom of give and take in the evaluation but did not minimize the factor of the supervisor's authoritative position to recommend for hiring, firing, or promotion, as a limiting element. This was something that the supervisor needed to accept. Her attitude in the relationship would help in reducing this limiting factor only to a relative degree and she could not expect to cancel its operation in the relationship.

Another factor entering into the prelimi-

nary thinking leading up to the evaluation project, was that a new executive was coming to the agency. From an administrative point of view it seemed that the staff might prefer that their introduction to the new executive be on the basis of an objective, joint analysis of their experience with the agency, in which they were participating, rather than hurried, subjective, oral statements of the supervisor not drawn from a more thoughtful base of conclusions regarding their performance.

Many of our professional staff had had little experience with a review of experience in a thoughtful and discriminating way except where it had been a part of a student field experience. For this reason and because we felt there had been a good deal of discussion in staff about evaluation, and also directly with supervisors, indicating the staff members' interest in wanting it, the supervisors offered to bring in a tentative outline for use in supervisory conferences with the workers. This was done with the understanding that we would all look forward to the staff's review of this experience before another periodic review the method of which the staff would take more responsibility for working out.

The form that was developed and approved by the staff was one that was basically quite similar to those used by some other private agencies, with their own variations to meet individual agency emphases. Since our agency is a private family agency in a semi-urban community, covering four hundred and eighty-seven square miles, with a service program not very well known, the community organization aspect of our job looms quite large. Job performance was, therefore, considered under the major headings of personal qualifications; skills for a well-rounded case work service, with ability to use psychological concepts with relative ease in relationships; administrative ability in organization of work, office routines, dictation, etc.; an interest, ability and demonstrated performance in giving leadership and stimulating community participation in the agency program. On the outline there was included at the end an item for the case worker's evaluation of her supervisory experience. The worker's point of view regarding her experience was thought to be a vital part of the evaluation conference.

The next question that arose was, "After a case worker and supervisor have had their review, what next?" It was expected that the supervisor would write a statement, not necessarily detailed, as that would only

have meaning for herself and the case worker, but a summary that indicated the direction that the case worker and the supervisor were going in their relationship; that is, where the case worker was able to take the lead and where she needed some guidance. Should the supervisor's summary be filed and be pulled out for amendment or modification if the case worker asked the executive or the case supervisor for a reference letter? In other words, is there a suggestion here that the case worker at some point does have a direct relationship with the executive or his assistant of the administrative staff? If the case worker is stimulated to think of her job as part of the bigger one of the agency, is the use of the evaluation material one of the important ways of helping this to become real? Does it follow that whether it is time for salary raise, promotion, or whatever the points are that bring in the executive it means something to a staff member's relations with the agency, especially the first or second year, to have the executive or case supervisor ask for an appointment to follow up the supervisor's evaluation with the worker and give the case worker an opportunity to express his own point of view? Would this indicate an interest "from the top" in the case worker, thus bridging the gap between the executive staff and the case working staff which is sometimes psychological as well as physical? The administrative and supervisory staff wondered if this sort of relationship were set up administratively, when case workers had channels open for discussion of satisfying supervisory experience, it might not follow that the administrative staff would develop better opportunities for integrating a negative experience when an "issue" arose later. This would build up the background of a relationship against which the "issue" could be better placed, and would prevent the isolated incident assuming proportions of such fantastic size that the case worker or supervisor becomes lost in the maze. What that seemed to be heading toward as an answer to our question, "What next," was a plan for the executive or the case supervisor to talk with case workers after they had had their review conferences with their own supervisors. This second conference would offer the staff member an opportunity to comment on her past experience in the agency beginning particularly around the evaluation, and in addition to offer suggestions regarding agency practices.

There seemed to be a good many difficulties in this plan. Staff members without any experience in this kind of triangle might see

it as a trap for themselves or identity with the absent one of the triangle, the supervisor, as one who might be "caught." In other words there would be two people discussing a relationship which involved a third and absent person whose relationship might or might not be the most important to the case worker. So much did depend on how the various persons did use themselves and the others in the triangle. It was significant that in the presenting of this second step some of the staff at first questioned it, expressing the idea that there was implicit in the plan admission of immaturity on the part of case workers who could not take care of themselves. Further discussion seemed to bring out more acceptance of this second step as an attempt to make more real what the agency had been trying to give in terms of interest in each staff member. The supervisors recognized the uncertainties in the plan but felt there was something to learn from it for all of us. It was thought the case supervisor in her conference with the workers might approach them something like this:

"I have your supervisor's report on what you and the supervisor together have worked out in your evaluation conference on your experience for the past six months or a year. I have made a brief summary of the pertinent points in her statement. (This would be case supervisor's brief summary of the worker's own supervisor's statement, which she would read.) I would like in this conference to get your own point of view directly to round out the picture." We agreed that if nothing more was accomplished than the case worker's representing herself to the administrative group and at the same time getting a reflection of supervisor's evaluation of her here, it would have value.

In preparing the staff for this second step a list of questions was suggested as a basis for discussion, the questions beginning with case work situations where the staff member felt he particularly used supervisory help and coming on to his expectancies and disappointments in the agency experience.

After the supervisors finished their part of the evaluation which consisted of from three to five hours in one or two conferences they wrote up their material and discussed it with the case supervisor, who made a brief summary bringing out that material which would be most pertinent. This brief statement was read then in the one-hour conference which the case supervisor had with the case workers. Before the case supervisor had her follow-up conferences with case workers she had gotten a strong sense of the experi-

ence up to this point of staff members with their own supervisors, in terms of clarification, integration, and stimulation toward new direction. The supervisors had brought out how much the wider selection of cases for reading in preparation for the evaluation (five or six selected by case worker to demonstrate various aspects of her work, "successes" and less satisfying ones) and how much the setting down according to outline, which covered such a wide area, stimulated them to see all sides of the worker's performance. They were aware, too, of course, that their fear of making judgments pushed them further with this, feeling it could only be faced as one was assured of one's fairness. This "pushing further" of the supervisor not only resulted in analysis of herself but in a wider, deeper understanding of the case worker's performance. The supervisor went back to the beginning of her relationship with the case worker, tried to recall what both she and case worker were at that time, what were the changes since, the evidences of this in the individual case work situations, in the case worker's staff and committee participation, in community organization and interpretation, and professional educational groups, etc. This basis of resource material was made as tangible as possible and shared by case worker and supervisor.

These were some of the points that came out in the case workers' conferences with the case supervisor:

There was unanimous agreement that the evaluation conferences had given a "lift" to the workers. Some workers expressed this more directly in terms of feeling the structural form of supervision, their place in it, as well as the supervisors'; their relation to clients, community and agency. Within this structure they had integrated their relative strengths and weaknesses, and found new direction for self-effort and use of supervision. This "lift" was expressed in relative degrees by the workers who found freedom in being able to express pent up feelings about not feeling surer of what was expected from them, or could be expected by them of the agency, and by the worker who felt a growing freedom in self-expression that carried over into her personal life, approximating the satisfying glow of an "art."

In most instances, case workers had accumulated fears, which, with the focus of evaluation, had magnified their feelings about shortcomings. They had gained a new courage and security as they had been reassured of supervisor's consciousness of their basic strengths. Several workers expressed a "new

respect for the agency" that expressed its interest by administrative review with them of their evaluation, an interest in their "point of view." Most of the case workers made specific suggestions for administrative follow-up. These grouped themselves as follows:

1. The flexibility of the relief policy was confusing. The case workers who seemed most understanding here were the ones who had carried through with the agency's developing program since separation from the public agency.

2. There was some confusion regarding the case worker's responsibility to share her cases with the supervisor. Should this be done routinely on all cases, or does this mean irresponsibility on the part of the case worker, or is there a middle ground, and as several workers brought out, how do their own feelings about authority enter in here?

3. Suggestions about dictation.

The case supervisor discussed with the workers individually their feelings about sharing the conference material when in a few cases it was new with their own supervisors, and left it to them to decide on the importance of this and whether she or case worker would do this, stressing the fact that the case supervisor did not wish to take away any of the opportunities for working out relationships that case worker felt able to stretch to. After this decision the case supervisor shared her conference material with the supervisors, who felt that from their follow-up conferences with the workers there had been indicated further evidence of growth and reintegration of the experience for both case worker and supervisor.

The case supervisor's impression of the whole evaluation project, which will be completed formally by staff discussion of the suggestions made by staff members, is that she, from her evaluation with other staff members as well as the workers under her direct supervision, has gained a more objective picture of workers as a fitting in of the mosaic pieces to a pattern of the whole, which brings out a clear defining of the direction of the design of the trend of both case workers and supervisors.

After building up our agency experience with evaluation of the professional staff, beginning there probably because there was stimulation from the staff and also probably because we felt on a little more familiar ground there through experience, the agency is now planning some method for analysis of the clerical job with the business staff.

One looks back on a sharing experience that has had much gain in it from one's own point of view. Satisfying gains of new insights into one's self and into the growth of others may temporarily blot out much of the insecurity that others have gone through in achieving that gain. Some of this is to be desired, but is there still the question, "Does

evaluation carry surgical implications?" May the supervisor in her eagerness for knowledge and skill see the end and become insensitive to the process? In developing confidence and skill in the dynamic evaluation process, we become soberly aware of the growing understanding and sensitivity essential in order to do it well.

Report from Washington on Social Security Legislation

By Glen Leet

Effective January 1, 1940, the Social Security Board will have authority to require that state public assistance plans "provide such methods of administration including . . . methods relating to the establishment and maintenance of *personnel standards on a merit basis* . . . as are found by the Board to be necessary for the proper and efficient operation of the plan." This is the most significant of the various amendments to the public assistance titles of the Social Security Act which have been enacted at this session. This amendment removes the greatest legal obstacle to effective supervision of state public assistance plans by the Social Security Board. Under the terms of the old act the Board was authorized to require such methods of administration as are found by the Board to be necessary for proper and efficient operation of public assistance plans, but it was specifically prohibited from establishing any standards relative to selection, compensation, or tenure of office of state personnel. Now, not only is this restriction removed and the Board given positive authority with respect to personnel standards but this has been fortified by another innocent little amendment whose significance has been generally overlooked. It provides that the federal government shall pay states one-half of the total of the sums expended for administrative purposes "as found necessary by the Board for the proper and efficient administration" of state plans for aid to dependent children and aid to the blind.

Of course, the term "personnel standards on a merit basis" does not mean that hereafter all persons employed for social work positions by state public assistance agencies will meet the standards set for membership in the American Association of Social Workers, but it will exclude from competition for social work positions, persons whose qualifications are only political in character, and it will afford some measure of security for qualified

people now holding social work positions. It will go a long way towards establishing a career service in state public assistance agencies not only for social workers but for all personnel employed by these agencies. An amendment providing for personnel standards has also been applied to unemployment compensation, and also to the titles administered by the U. S. Children's Bureau. Due to an oversight in drafting, the Social Security Board is given authority over personnel standards in the programs supervised by the U. S. Children's Bureau.

The term "personnel standards on a merit basis" will be construed by the Board to prohibit "pernicious political activity." Senator Hatch had an amendment drafted specifically for this purpose but withheld it after being assured on the Floor of the Senate that its purpose would be covered by the personnel standards amendment. The Hatch Law itself is of far-reaching significance. It paves the way for the extension of civil service to all federal positions which are not policy-determining in character. The Senate Committee on Civil Service has already favorably reported a bill to extend the Hatch Law to all state employees administering federal funds. This was requested by the President at the time he signed the Hatch bill and will probably be enacted early in 1940.

Beginning January 1, 1940, the federal government will match one-half of state old age assistance and aid to the blind payments up to \$40 a month instead of \$30 as before. The federal government will match one-half of state payments for assistance up to \$18 per month for the first dependent child in the family and \$12 for every other child in the same family. Effective now, the federal government will match payments to children up to the age of eighteen who are regularly attending school. Amendments provide authorization for increased annual appropriations for grants to states of \$2,020,000 for

maternal and child health services; \$1,020,000 for services for crippled children; \$1,562,000 for vocational rehabilitation, and \$3,000,000 for public health services.

Old age insurance benefits payments will begin on January 1, 1940. More liberal benefits will be paid for those now nearing retiring age and supplemental benefits for aged wives and survivors have been provided. Changes in the old age insurance titles of the Social Security Act transform it from a system of saving for old age protection to a much broader system of social insurance emphasizing security for the family unit. These changes did not come about without a lot of hard work and vigorous support from different groups and organizations.

In its educational work in connection with social legislation the AASW has really used its influence effectively. In general organizations and individuals interested in liberal social legislation are notoriously ineffective. They waste their energies tilting at windmills and are asleep or exhausted when the time comes for effective action. That has not been the case with the AASW. In times of crisis they have acted swiftly, quietly, and effectively, as in the following instance. On May 19th the House Ways and Means Committee decided in executive session and by a secret ballot not to accept the recommendation of the Social Security Board that the federal contribution for aid to dependent children be increased from one-third to one-half. Within forty-eight hours members of the committee began to hear from social workers and public welfare officials back in their own districts. Committee members learned how much the proposed amendment would mean to widows and dependent children in their own communities. They were amazed to learn how many people were interested in the children's program. These communications carried weight because they came from individuals who knew what they were talking about. When the amendments came before Ways and Means a week later the committee amended its own bill, increased the federal contribution from one-third to one-half, in which form it passed both the House and the Senate.

Unlike experienced politicians, socially minded groups generally rail bitterly against those who oppose their wishes but never remember those who have helped them. That is why politicians so often consider it not worth while to play ball with them. The Association has not made that mistake. Many of the social workers who urged the increased aid for the children's program wrote or wired again expressing congratulations and appre-

ciation. As a result, a number of congressmen are now quite happy about the whole thing. They are proud that they had something to do with an amendment which helped widows and dependent children. For example, Congressman John W. McCormack, who introduced the bill to increase the aid for dependent children wrote Commissioner Loula Dunn, "I know of nothing in my legislative career to date that is more pleasing to me than to have led such a fight successfully. It was nice of you to write the letter that you did and I appreciate it very much." Next year a number of congressmen will welcome communications from their social worker constituents, and what is more important, hereafter many of them will feel a special responsibility to see that the children are "done right by."

When the amendment for personnel standards was hanging in the balance, members of the Association again reached up over the fireplace for their trusty flintlocks and swiftly swung into action. Although the Association was formally on record in favor of these measures and had testified in their behalf, its really great contribution towards the advancement of social legislation during 1939 has been due to its social alertness and quick action in times of crisis.

Of course, social workers and public welfare officials were not alone in these battles. For the children's program the American Legion did very effective work. Few will ever know how Eliot Kaplan of the National Civil Service Reform League came through in the crisis involving the merit system. Florence Kirlin of the National League of Women Voters, President Jacob Baker of the United Federal Workers of America, and Msgr. John O'Grady, Secretary of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, were always on hand when needed. They have made a monumental contribution towards the advancement of liberal social legislation.

In 1940 the big fight will be over the National Health Program. The Senate committee which has been conducting hearings on this bill has just issued a report favoring the purposes and objectives of the Wagner bill. The committee will work on the bill in the fall and has promised to report out a bill early in the next session. The report of the committee concludes "Our government is dedicated to promoting the welfare of the people and the protection and improvement of health and well-being. Making available to all of the people the great life-saving services which modern medicine has to offer is an objective which every right-thinking citizen supports."

Staff Notes

The national staff supplied to delegates at the Delegate Conference at Buffalo as a supplement to reports from national committees its own comment on certain problems which it sees in the Association's operation and program. The following notes on *THE COMPASS* are taken from this informal document.

The Problem of The Compass

Periodically the reform and development of *THE COMPASS* have been discussed in the Association. Whatever disagreements there have been about the future goal at which the Association should aim, there has been consistent acknowledgment of the importance of *THE COMPASS* as the one direct way in which the AASW might reach every one of its members. In 1929 as in 1939 the conviction existed that a future journal of professional quality must be evolved out of the present embryo.

There is great variety of reaction to *THE COMPASS*. Some opinions are highly favorable, while others are sharply critical. Staff opinion is ranged on the critical side. The normal reader's aversion to committee reports, to articles on Association problems of organization, to heaviness and monotony of style has been candidly emphasized again and again. It has been pointed out that the great majority of members are engaged in social work practice and that *THE COMPASS* has been far from touching any of their concerns. The virtue of spontaneous contributions on events and issues of professional interest has been suggested. On one hand there has been urged the development of features typical of the journals of the older professions—papers on the technical aspects of social work practice, abstracts of professional contributions wherever found, etc. On the other hand need has been expressed for a publication wherein personal and chapter notes, individual letters to the editor, and good journalistic accounts of current events in the social work arena might find a place.

The progress of *THE COMPASS* toward any of these desired goals has been conservative, for fairly obvious reasons. The actual space commanded by *THE COMPASS* is small and was this year reduced by a ten per cent cut in its budget. When one member's meat is another member's poison, space becomes an important factor in providing enough reading matter to cater to differences in palate and digestion. Another check upon editorial initiative and resourcefulness is the necessity

for using *THE COMPASS* as a house organ. *THE COMPASS* represents the cheapest and most effective means of conveying certain kinds of organizational information. Accordingly it carries such materials as those prepared for discussion of Delegate Conference proposals, reports of the national committees, and other productions which may lack ordinary reader interest but be useful to chapter committees in pursuit of their assignments. It is not easy to report purpose, function, and structure discussion in tabloid. In spite of their lack of appeal to the individual member, these materials have been acknowledged to have a value for the work of the Association. A third handicap to the promotion of *THE COMPASS* is the limited amount of time which national staff can give to it.

Among the other pressing demands upon Association resources, possibly that of *THE COMPASS* does not rank first. We might find that the reasons for our failure to make it meet Association needs are traceable to difficulties which we are not yet prepared to remove, but since it has become increasingly evident that more and more members would like to read *THE COMPASS* if it were more readable, what is there to be done to make the reading of it a less painful task?

One exacting phase of an editorial promotion is to find materials. The production of professional papers and articles in the field of social work is not spontaneous among individual practitioners and no tradition yet exists which demands of the social worker that he present the fruits of his experience to his fellows or establish his prestige through written contributions to professional journals. Most of our professional literature has been written to order for special meetings or conference programs and the stimulus to write for such purposes is limited in its effect to the few. The larger group of professional social workers has little occasion to develop a sense of obligation for writing about the problems and results of social work practice. It may possibly be that physicians and lawyers and engineers are endowed with greater literary ambitions and skill than social workers but it is now certain that they possess both a tradition and a pattern for professional contributions which social workers still lack. They have the advantage over social workers of an established demand upon them to contribute to the common fund of professional knowledge. Moreover they have surer ways of knowing what will be acceptable to their colleagues as contributions that belong with-

in the field of medicine, law or engineering.

Staff experience with *THE COMPASS* would indicate that the chapters might do some very profitable work in stimulating written contributions on topics which they feel should be of interest. All the evidence in possession of the staff suggests that chapter enterprise in this area would produce a wide variety of materials and that in character and quality these productions might present some interesting problems in the definition of Association policy for *THE COMPASS*. The development of such problems of editorial choice would seem however no great risk. Decisions about reader interest have to be made in a vacuum when there is no reliable basis for testing opinions such as chapter work in this province would provide. In addition variations in the stages of development both of social work practice and chapter organization and program make it necessary for the Association to seek help which only chapters can give in defining where their interests lie and what kinds of material bear on those interests. Ventures into more ambitious planning for *THE COMPASS* might well wait on the results of an activity which would provide more concrete grounds for determining major trends of concern, the use to be made of available space, and the kind of extended resources which are needed for professional expression in the official organ of the Association.

In the meantime there might be gain if *THE COMPASS* were stripped of any pretensions to be other than a news bulletin for the members of the Association, and for chapters and chapter committees. It might present, in the simplest terms, the matters of organization which members might have an interest in; chapter business, national business, reports, minutes, and announcements. It would put the publication on a basis of realistic limitation as to staff time and free some money for other budget needs. It might define more clearly the problem of the Association in its immediate lack of opportunity to develop a professional journal.

State Councils' Meeting at Buffalo

Members interested in the Association's state councils met together again this year during the week of the National Conference of Social Work. The meeting had been arranged by Dr. Edna Hawley of California (who presided), Helen Crosby of New York, and Cecile Whalen of Michigan, who had been asked at the Seattle meeting in 1938, to act as an informal program committee.

Review of recent experiences of the councils and clearer formulation of some of the questions about them brought out the need to continue this scrutiny. A similar meeting is to be planned for next year.

Many of the questions and problems in state councils were brought into focus by Miss Mary W. Rittenhouse, delegate to the New York State Council from the New York City Chapter. Miss Rittenhouse had reviewed existing materials about the state councils available in the national office and had prepared a summary outlining their history and original purpose, structure and powers, present programs, and present relations to chapters. Members also described current council activities and questions which had been arising particularly with respect to the types of activities which are appropriate for state councils and the functional relationships of the member chapters to their councils. Representatives were present from the California, Ohio, Massachusetts, New York, Michigan and Tennessee Councils. There is also a council in Pennsylvania called a "division," as in Tennessee.

The Association's experience with state councils, the development of their distinctive functions, is still new. That their development must, however, be a dynamic part of the machinery and structure of the whole Association was brought out clearly in the meeting. There are real values, therefore, in this continuing group which will give attention to such problems as the relation of state councils to chapters, a definition of valid functions for state councils and how their development bears on the development of state chapters and regional conferences, and the relation of state councils to the national Association.

Early council development, like early chapter organization, requires a flexibility and mobility which will bring to the Association the richest possible experience. Examination of the existing councils reveals as many types of organization and differing definitions of powers and functions. But it is such discussion as that at Buffalo which provides an important resource for shaping common concerns. Already legislation and civil service matters seem a frequently accepted council activity; responsibility for assistance to members in non-chapter territory and stimulation of chapter organization, major obligations. Already councils are aware that to derive full value from such machinery chapter representatives must be those who are active in the chapter and make use of themselves as a channel of communication between chapters and councils.

Controversy in Western Massachusetts

The national Association has been asked to accept for investigation a grievance presented by Mary Hylan, a member of the Western Massachusetts Chapter, regarding her dismissal as case supervisor from the Children's Aid Society of Springfield, Massachusetts, on May 15th of this year.

Miss Hylan and Miss Anna McConnell, another member of the staff who is not an AASW member, submitted on May 18th to the Western Massachusetts Chapter a joint petition, requesting "an impartial investigation to determine: (1) whether the undersigned were unjustly dismissed; (2) whether the terms of dismissal were in keeping with professional standards, with special reference to the fact that a hearing was denied, and that only nine working days were allowed for finishing work, and that an inadequate length of time was permitted for securing other employment."

At the time of receipt of the petition, the Chapter requested assistance from the national office regarding customary procedures and the basis for the Association's concern in alleged grievances.

After deliberation in Executive Committee and at its annual meeting on June 29th, the Chapter decided it could not make the investigation requested. As stated in the Chapter's letter to Miss Hylan, "The reason for this was that the Chapter was so divided in its points of view on the matter that no definite conclusion could be reached. Some of the members felt that this inquiry did not fall within the jurisdiction of the Chapter, while others felt that we, as a Chapter, were not equipped to handle an impartial investigation. We hope to equip ourselves with sufficient knowledge about personnel practices and standards in the future to undertake requests of this kind." Miss Hylan was told by the Chapter that it was possible for her to refer her request to the national Executive Committee. Walter West, Executive Secretary, has made a preliminary visit to interview the Western Massachusetts chapter chairman and the chairman of the Board of the Children's Aid Society, in order to organize the appropriate procedures for the national Association investigation.

Report on the 1939 Election

The following officers and committee members were chosen in the election completed last month, as reported by a Committee of Tellers.

OFFICERS—1-YEAR TERM

President—HARRY GREENSTEIN.....Baltimore
1st Vice-President—GRACE L. COYLE.....Cleveland
2nd Vice-President—CHARLOTTE CARR.....Chicago
3rd Vice-President—PIERCE ATWATER.....St. Paul
Secretary—SAVILLA MILLIS SIMONS.....Chicago
Treasurer—FREDERICK I. DANIELS.....New York City

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS— 3-YEAR TERM

Ewan Clague—Washington, D. C.
Irene Farnham Conrad—Houston
Arlene Johnson—Seattle (Los Angeles
as of September 1st)

CHAIRMAN, NOMINATING COMMITTEE— 1-YEAR TERM

Clara A. Kaiser—New York City

NOMINATING COMMITTEE MEMBERS— 1-YEAR TERM

Norris E. Class—Portland, Ore.
Alvin R. Guyler—Philadelphia
Kathleen Millikin—Chicago
Agnes Van Driel—Washington, D. C.

NON-CHAPTER DELEGATES—1-YEAR TERM

Ana Bosch—New Mexico
Louise Cuddy—Idaho
John L. Goetz—North Dakota
Charlotte Leeper Hanson—Vermont
Eunice D. Harkey—Kansas
Dorothy B. Whitton—New Hampshire

According to the count of the national office there were 11,230 ballots mailed to members. Three thousand, five hundred seventy-nine ballots were returned to the national office, of which 98 were invalid and not included in the count, so that the number of ballots counted totaled 3,481. The number of members voting was, therefore, 31 per cent of the total membership as of June 1, 1939.

Members of the Committee of Tellers were: Margaret Wead, Chairman, Mary Ellen Hoffman and Nicholas Rezak.

This year the June issue of THE COMPASS was omitted and therefore Volume XX which ends with the present issue will contain 10 numbers instead of 11. The next issue of THE COMPASS will be published October 1939 and will be Volume XXI, Number 1.